

WEISE WORDS

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR HEALTHY LIVING

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY:

Emotional Abandonment—When Your Spouse Shuts You Out (Part 2)

The first step to dealing with emotional abandonment is to identify the root cause and to begin to deal with it. Don't settle for living in isolation. Ask God for more in your marriage and then trust Him as you faithfully try to make changes. Here are some suggestions for re-establishing a loving connection with your spouse:

1. **Agree to talk:** At some point you have to agree to talk about the problems that exist between you. If you're going to resolve issues, there needs to be a mutual commitment to listen to the other person's concerns and to work towards improving the situation. Don't corner your spouse with an unexpected lecture, but set a time and agree to start to work through your issues.
2. **Be prepared:** Before you have the talk, take the time separately to think through the unresolved issues that you'll be discussing. What are your concerns in the relationship? In what areas do you feel you need to improve? What are your expectations of your spouse? To put your thoughts down on paper may be best, but either way, be prepared to be open and honest with each other about the real issues between you. Be sure to take the time to really listen to what your spouse is saying. Give each other uninterrupted time to share your view on things.
3. **Be direct but gentle:** Neither of you has anything to gain by holding back your true feelings. Remember: unresolved issues lie at the heart of emotional detachment. So lay all your cards out on the table by sharing your hurts clearly. Don't allow things to get out of hand. Be committed to talk through things sensibly. Take breaks to cool it if necessary but agree to continue. Ask each other the tough questions, and talk through the difficult issues that have been eating away at your relationship. Regardless of which partner initiated the wrong, you both need to work at resolving the problem.
4. **Begin to meet unmet needs:** Often a person pulls back from the relationship because, in their mind, their needs are not being met. A healthy marriage demands that both partners actively work to discern the needs of their spouse, and work to meet those needs. Seek to understand your spouse's needs and ask yourself how you can start to better express love by meeting these needs. Make your spouse and sorting things out your new priority.
5. **Begin to meet unmet needs:** Often a person pulls back from the relationship because, in their mind, their needs are not being met. A healthy marriage demands that both partners actively work to discern the needs of their spouse, and work to meet those needs. Seek to understand your spouse's needs and ask yourself how you can start to better express love by meeting these needs. Make your spouse and sorting things out your new priority.

Emotional Abandonment-When Your Spouse Shuts You Out –Part 2 (Continued)

6. **Intentionally re-engage:** If you are to re-establish your emotional connection, it won't happen by accident and it won't happen overnight. You need to agree to make your relationship a priority and spend some quality time together. Plan a few dates and put each other in your schedules. It's time to re-enter one another's lives again.
7. **Act kindly:** This may not be a revolutionary new idea, but it can have that kind of an effect on your marriage. You must act kindly toward your spouse. Small gestures of warmth, acts of kindness, and efforts to rekindle the romance between you will go a long way toward renewing your bond with one another. Do this from the heart with real commitment to make the necessary changes.
8. **Love unconditionally:** Somebody has to break out of the negative cycle of eye for an eye, poor treatment for poor treatment. You need to step out of the insult-for-insult cycle and respond differently. You cannot control your spouse's behavior, but you can control your own. Regardless of how your spouse responds, you must choose to treat them with love. This is not easy to do when your partner is not reciprocating, but it is what you vowed to do when you promised to love each other *"for better or for worse."* And nothing breaks down emotional barriers like unconditional love.
9. **Allow God to work:** I'm going to challenge you to ask God to change you. God wants your best and He'll always be ready to take full responsibility for any life that is totally surrendered to Him. That also includes re-engaging with your spouse and getting attached in love again. God wants that and He will guide you in that, if you'll allow Him to.

We've all got issues to work through in our relationships. Whether your problems stem from bitterness, unforgiveness, dishonesty, lack of kindness, unfaithfulness, or something else, God offers you His power to enable you to live in a way that honors Him. There's no doubt in my mind that God wants your marriage to work and that you desire to have warmth and a close connection with your spouse. That's His design. Let's go after it.

Excerpt Currie, Dr. David with Hoos, Glen (2003). *Emotional Abandonment: When Your Spouse Shuts You Out*, Family Life Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/challenges/drifting-apart/emotional-abandonment-when-your-spouse-shuts-you-out#.VBIJf8LlaHX>

For more information about this article or to receive help with this or other relationship issues, please contact me at pwcounseling.com or call 813.643.2600. I am here as a resource for you.